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ABSTRACT

School security encompasses a larger area than it did a decade ago. Whereas it used to imply the need to provide a safe educational environment for students, it now connotes the protection of all school personnel, facilities, and equipment. Moreover, the concern in school security has moved from accidental to deliberate losses. The single greatest problem is crime--crimes against people and crimes against property. This review discusses the development of an adequate school security program: identifying security problems, selecting a security director, establishing policies, and instituting preventive measures. Types of prevention covered are manufactured devices, guard personnel, and student and community volunteers. (Author)

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School Security

Nan Coppock

Schools and colleges have one common problem today. It is no longer student activism, sit-ins, confrontations, and mass demonstrations. It can be summed up in one word: crime.

Powell (1972)

The term school security is relatively young, but the concept is not. School administrators have always endeavored to provide a safe educational environment for students. Recently, however, school security has grown to include the protection of all school personnel, facilities, and equipment. Prevention of deliberate, as opposed to accidental, injuries and losses is now the foremost consideration in school security. Of greatest concern among such losses are crimes against individuals and vandalism.

Both the newness and the urgency of the enlarged concept of school security are attested to by the founding in 1970 of the International Association of School Security Directors (Grealy 1972). The IASSD hopes to achieve its primary goal of safety for students and staff by exchanging ideas among school system security representatives on such matters as assaults, disturbances, riots, bombings, vandalism, thefts, arson, and drug abuse. Exchanges might take place through a national center for collecting and distributing school security materials. Manuals suggesting procedures for the handling of security problems or regional and local seminars for school administrators are other possible methods of exchange.

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Schools need to develop systematic and effective ways of dealing with security problems. Choice of a security director who can correctly identify those problems is a good beginning. The establishment of clear security policies and consideration of proper preventive measures should follow.

Unrelated factors sometimes stand in the way of building a security system. One common problem is the lack of financial resources. Either the board and/or taxpayers are reluctant to spend money for security devices and personnel, or the district simply does not *have* the money. A possible solution is the enlistment of volunteer aid.

The involvement of students and community in school security is both philosophically and economically sound. A competent security staff of committed volunteers need not be expensive. Also, volunteers can act as public relations people to convince the rest of the community that security measures are preferable to vandalism and to the lack of safety for students and teachers.

The documents reviewed here deal with specific problems of modern school security, namely crimes against property and crimes against people. Student and community involvement in school security is also discussed. Numerous documents mention various kinds of locks and alarm systems; other types of prevention are referred to throughout the review.

CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY

The literature on vandalism far outweighs that on any other aspect of school security. Estimates of the price tag on vandalism range from $150 to $200 million annually (Furno and Wallace 1972, Wells 1971, and Nielsen 1971).

According to Wells, large and integrated schools are most likely to have problems with disruption, violence, and vandalism. Some of the reasons he cites for increased vandalism are expensive, readily salable equipment; fires started by burglars and revolutionaries; and outsiders—drifters, dropouts, pushouts, loiterers.

Typical of antivandalism measures are those suggested by Edwards (1971):

- employment of security guards
- 24-hour deployment of custodial staff
- installation of unbreakable doors and tamper-proof locks
- use of an intrusion detection system

Libraries are frequent targets of vandals and book thieves. Davis (1971) notes an increase in the incidence of arson and vandalism in libraries. In a survey of the extent of student violence and its impact on academic libraries, she discusses specific incidents and suggests how security may be improved.

In the October 1972 *American School & University*, case studies describe three manufacturers' systems for preventing book thefts by electronically sensitizing and desensitizing special paper, tape, or metallic strips ("Technology vs. the Academic Book Thief" 1972). One high school cut book losses by 92 percent using a combination of two security measures: closure of exits regarded as potential security leaks and an automatic electronic detection system. Door checks were considered but ruled out as impractical.

Furno and Wallace (1972) discuss accountability for acts of vandalism. According to a 1971 NEA questionnaire, 76 percent of the school districts responding had

Various sources recommend the following steps for a school security program:

- Identify the security problems of the school
- Select a qualified security director
- Establish clear policies on law enforcement, crime protection, and general police services
- Consider which preventive measures will best serve the school's security needs

parental responsibility laws. In these school districts damage caused by vandals was over four times *greater* than that in those districts without such laws. Furthermore, twice the percentage of loss was recovered in the latter than in the former. But as the authors point out, such statistics neither prove nor disprove the effectiveness of parental responsibility laws.

Agreeing with this conclusion, Wells (1971) adds that there is no evidence showing that a crackdown in discipline, spanking, suspension, or expulsion often does any more than intensify the problem.

The difficulty of safeguarding school property and facilities is evidenced by the variety of devices manufactured for that purpose. Among the sophisticated alarm systems are microwave motion detectors. An article in the July 1971 issue of *American School & University* ("To Catch a Thief, Try Microwaves") reports the effectiveness of a microwave system in completely eliminating breakins in a Colorado Springs school. Turchen (1972) describes some recent technological advances and how they help in security closed-circuit television.

Also proposed as vandal deterrents are types of construction materials such as fencing, windows, and lighting (Nielsen 1971). One writer compares costs and effectiveness of various kinds of lighting ("Vandals Don't Like the Spotlight" 1971).

Greenberg (1969) discusses the many interrelated problems of school vandalism and solutions that have been applied in selected school systems. Difficulties in relying on technological or other security means are pointed out. For real, long-term progress in reducing the present level of vandalism, Greenberg describes a research program designed to develop well-defined solutions.

CRIMES AGAINST PEOPLE

A comparison of the national school crime rates in 1964 and 1968 is alarming (Powell 1972):

CRIME	*PERCENTAGE INCREASE 1964-1968*
Assaults on Teachers	7,100
Crimes by Nonstudents	2,600
Narcotics	1,069
Robberies	306
Drunkenness	179
Assaults on Students	167
Weapons Offenses	136
Burglaries, Larcenies	86
Homicides	73
Forcible Rapes	61
Aggravated Assaults	43
Vandalism Incidents	35

Some of the devices already mentioned can help reduce crimes against people as well as against property. Gardner (1972), for example, cites recorded evidence of crime rate decrease due to improved lighting in certain large cities. However, the risk of a student or teacher becoming the victim of a violent crime in urban areas has caused metropolitan schools to depend increasingly on armed security guards.

The serious problems of discipline, control, and security—and the ensuing problems caused by reliance on armed guards—are reviewed in a 1971 position paper by the National Urban League (NUL). A fall 1969 survey revealed that only four of the fifty-one major cities responding did not employ their own security officers or use city policemen in daily school operations. The NUL contends that it is impossible for a favorable learning climate to be established within this type of environment. Therefore the unchallenged use of more and more security forces in schools must be reversed. The league urges the removal of security personnel and armed policemen as permanent fixtures in schools. Instead, quality education in an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect might better be achieved by calling on a coalition of students, community members, and educational personnel to determine alternatives for developing a safe and pleasant learning environment.

Guard dogs are used successfully in Memphis, Tennessee, and in San Bernardino, California (Wells 1971). Some urban schools rely on undercover agents posing as students. But there is no general agreement about the effectiveness of "guard personnel" in preventing school crimes.

Student and Community Involvement

Discussing current trends in evaluating the role of school security, Powell (1972) notes that preventive security programs should involve students, parents, area residents, community groups, and others. He continues:

> School security, unlike college or, in fact, any other type of security operation, must involve the outside community. Parents, "community aides," and even the students themselves, must be involved in this program as "eyes and ears" and as the best approach to internal problems.

This recommendation may well hold the key to what is lacking in most school security systems. While technology and professional training can help reduce the amount of property destruction and injury to individuals, the actions and attitudes of the school community may be even more important.

According to L'Hote (1970), theft and arson can be fought by involving students to the point where they have a vested interest in maintenance of facilities.

Several successful student involvement programs are cited by Nielsen (1971). For instance, Houston's Burbank Junior High combats vandalism by instilling a sense of pride in the usefulness and beauty of the school. In Akron, Ohio, a highly organized student security system cooperates with the school board, highway patrol, and police force to formulate security objectives and procedures.

Nielsen also describes numerous effective community involvement programs. Supporting the idea of a community school, school administrators in Alpena, Michigan, accent the positive side of school use. They strive to involve all citizens from preschoolers to senior citizens in some form of educational activities. Specific examples of this effort are keeping most buildings open and available during nonschool hours, utilizing instructional talents among community resource persons and outside agencies, and providing opportunities for institutional learning and fun. Vandalism is treated as a symptom in Rochester, New York, where neighborhood committees suggest changes in school programs and personnel.

Security problems must be regarded as school community challenges (Nielsen 1971). Any effort to resolve such challenges on a piecemeal and patchwork basis can be only partially successful.

Powell (1972) observes that while school security cannot pattern itself after a police department, private security operation, or campus security program, it can borrow ideas and procedures from them. It is important to remember that school security programs must be carefully tailored to meet the needs of each school and community.

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